

Dear madam.

June 3 / 1834

I am now going to try to write a little  
account of my life as nearly as I can remember. It makes  
me sorrowful to think of my past days. They have been very dark  
and full of tears. I always longed and prayed for liberty. I sometimes  
hoped I should get it and then I would think and pray and study  
out some way to earn money enough to buy myself by work  
nights, and then something would fall out and ~~then~~ <sup>my</sup>  
all my hopes would die and it seemed as though I must live  
and die a slave without any one to pity me. But I will begin  
as far back as I can remember. When I was between <sup>two</sup> and ~~three~~  
three years old the cruel destroyers tore me from my tender mother  
somewhere in Africa far back from the sea. They  
carried me along distance to the ships. I looked back and wept  
all the way. The ship was full of men and women and loaded  
down with chains. I was so small they let me run about on  
deck. After many long days they brought me to Charleston. I  
then a slaveholder bought me and took me up into Pendleton  
county. I suppose that I stayed with him about a six months.  
Then he sold me to a man whose name was Bradley.  
Ever since then I have been called by that name.  
This man was called a wonderfully kind master and he  
was more kind than most masters. He gave me enough to  
eat and did not beat me <sup>so much as most masters generally do</sup> but all that was  
nothing to me. I spent many sleepless nights and  
bathed my face in tears, because I was a slave.  
I sighed and groaned for liberty. My master kept  
me ignorant of every thing that he could. I never  
told me any thing about my soul, nor that I was a sinner  
against God. When I got to be four teen years old, I remembered  
that I used to think a great deal about freedom. It was my  
heart's desire I could not keep it out of my mind. I looked  
back and thought how much I had passed through and how  
much my mind had ached to be free and to feel within  
me the life of liberty and then I looked ahead and all  
that I could see was hopeless bondage dark and dreary  
and my heart ached as though it would break.  
If I have said before I say better created than  
most of the slaves that I know.



I never suffered for food & never was plagued with a  
whip but oh my soul my flesh was <sup>tormented</sup> with  
kicks and knocks more than I can tell. Where I was a  
boy my master knocked me down number of times.  
Once when I was nine years old he got angry and knocked  
me down and I lost my senses and lay some time when  
I came to myself he told me that he thought he had killed  
me. At another time he struck me with a <sup>comb</sup> and  
put the comb in to my head. I have said that I have fogged  
enough I wish I could say as much about my clothes but I let  
that alone for I can't think of any suitable words to use in telling  
you just how I fared as to clothes. I had to work & never  
had to be in the field always by sunrise and a hard  
worked till dark stopping at noon only long enough  
to eat dinner. Off here was a but fifteen year old I took what  
was called the cold plague by being over-worked & was sick alone  
time. My master came to see me one day while I was lying  
and groaning with pain and said "I would as soon knock down  
him in the head as if he was an oppressor" and often his child  
would come with axes and knives and shake them at me  
and poke me and make as tho they would knock me in the head  
but I have hope a heart this of the Lord at length raised me up but  
I lost ~~me~~ <sup>my</sup> interest in the care of one of my uncles. At this time my master  
moved to the Arkansas territory and died. Of the family there hired me  
out. After a little while my mistress sent for me to come and live with  
her. She said that she could not get along with  
me. After my master died I began to continue hard work but  
self. After working all day for my mistress I used to go to bed and  
sleep three or four hours and get up and work the rest of the night for myself. I used to make  
working collars for horses out of hickory by planing them. I could make one collar in about eight  
hours. I gradually took time enough from my sleep to make two collars in a week.  
The collars would sell for fifty cents apiece. One summer I used to take from my sleep  
from three to four hours every night. But I found after a while that I was growing weak and faint  
and had to sleep more. The first money I got I laid out for a pig. The next year I owned  
thirteen and the next about thirty. There was a great deal of wild land there that belonged to  
Congress. I used to go out and dig up little patches with my hoe and there a plat of  
corn. I used to go out and dig it up with this corn I fed my pigs and used to sell a barrel  
corn and get up in the night and tend it. With this corn I fed my pigs and used to sell a barrel  
every year. By this I saved a little patch of tobacco and sold it and by now I was  
happy. In this way I worked five years and found after taking out my losses that I had got  
one hundred and thirty dollars. With this I hired my time for two years. During these two  
years I worked almost all the time night and day. The drive of liberty burned within me so strong and  
strong up my nerves and I began to feel my soul so much that I could do with my little rest and sleep and  
could do a great deal more work than I ever did before. When the two years were out I went home and  
three hundred dollars besides feeding and cloathing myself. When the two years were out I went home and  
with my time for eighteen months more and went two hundred and fifty miles west nearly to Texas where  
I could make more money. After working three eighteen months I made enough to buy myself. Which  
I did in 1833 just about one year ago. I paid for myself in all about seven hundred dollars which  
As soon as I was free I started for a free state and came to Cincinnati. When I arrived there  
I heard of Lane University two miles out of the city. I longed to get an education. I had been praying  
to God for years that my poor dark mind might see the light of knowledge. I asked for admission into  
the University. They pitied me and took me in. Though I knew nothing of the studies which were required  
for admission I am so ignorant that I suppose it will take me two years to get up with the honest class in the  
University. I am interested as pleasantly and treated just as kindly and as much like a brother by the students as tho  
my skin was as white and my education was as good as that of any member of the University. In every thing I am  
treated just like an equal and am proud brother. Thank the Lord prejudice against color is too mean a thing  
to live in Lane University. If my life is spared I expect to spend some years here and prepare to preach the  
Gospel. I will now mention a few things which I could not bring in my walk and was going along with my story.  
In the year 1828 I saw some Christians who talked with me about my soul. I showed one that I was



[illegible]

James Bradley  
Lane Summary June 8. 35

My dear Sister

I cannot address you as a stranger.

I am sure you I do not feel like one. I have read your book  
and thank God for it. and now thank you with all my heart.

In the name of all that is dear to human will bring I thank you

Our cause is onward in this region - the very step of its progress is contested by a blind, unreasoning, bitterly prejudiced and procrustean opposition - breathing out threatenings and proscriptions - The students of this Institution (with the exception of three or four - and those decidedly below the mediocrity of talents) are divided into Abolitionists and Anti-Slaveryists - The cause is working in the vicinity - We have established five day schools among the three thousand colored people of this county. A Dispensary with twice weekly lectures - living schools for teaching adults to read. Hold the schools and Bible classes for the Sabbath - We are also establishing a reading room and library for them - I have much to say and much eagerness to acquire knowledge - now with rapidity of acquisition - But I must say en passant about our dear brother James and his communication - The whole train of thought throughout is entirely his own - I have situated the construction of ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> sentences where the idea was expressed obviously - I have also expressed certain words and substituted phrases which were local and unthought of others which would be understood. But the whole scope of thought, the argument, and the mode of thinking exhibited are his own exclusively - I generally the phraseology - Over



Upon perceiving that the latter part of it is not his handwriting. He was called away before he  
 had finished copying it from the first draft - and as it would not reach Boston by the time specified  
 in your letter. If the transcription of it was delayed at all. I copied the latter part of the letter - for which  
 I am sure the ~~editor~~ compositor of the printing office will give me no thanks. Mr. Thompson  
 the dear brother from Kentucky who has admitted his slaves. and of whom you speak with great  
 kindness. has been so occupied since the receipt of your letter in preparing a long abolition document  
 for the purpose of influencing his friends in Kentucky that it has been impossible for him to comply  
 with your request. This should have given him great pleasure to have done so -  
 I have heard recently, Madam that you are the wife of David Child Esq. - with which  
 name as the author of the "Despotism of Freedom" I have had some matter. The most  
 hearty and paternal associations - Please present him my warmest salutations in the bonds of  
 a brotherhood of sympathy for suffering humanity - And now my dear sister the roadstead  
 your labor of love and make you an angel of mercy to all the oppressed of earth -  
 Most truly yours in the  
 Hope of Yours  
 Theodore D. Weld

Bradley  
 Self freed man

David Child  
 Esq.  
 Care of David F. Child Esq.  
 Boston Mass  
 Single

